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Hair (Kesh)

An Indispensable Symbol of Sikh identity



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KESH - INDISPENSABLE SYMBOL OF SIKH IDENTITY -

Zoologically speaking, Man is an animal in animal kingdom, a mammal amongst animals according to taxonomy and the *Homo sapiens* amongst the mammals. The term *Homo sapiens* means "Man the Wise". Why ? Because he is a rational being. And who is rational ? The one who thinks. Who does do it ? Man; the word in medieval English and Anglo-saxon, is 'mann' akin to German 'mann', Goth 'manna', etc., probably in its Indo-European base 'man' to think, associated or cognate with Latin 'mens', i.e., mind. Hence, its basic sense is, "the one that thinks". In our own language, the word '*maanas*' is derived from man (mind), the faculty of thinking and reasoning.

The zoologist studies the animals of all species, kinds and types, but it is anthropology, which exclusively studies man, and amongst all sciences it is anthropology, which means, "The science or study of Man". Hence, properly speaking, the study of man is the domain of anthropologists and the divisions and subdivisions of different sciences put forth their respective claims of distinction as separate disciplines. Still, everything that is studied about man, comes within the embrace and the umbrella of anthropology.

Anthropology studies man right from his evolutionary origin to all aspects of life from his hoary past to his present. We are living in the bloom of science age and so I deeply felt to scientifically deal with the topic in hand. Mainly, the physical anthropology studies man in his living condition and dead condition. In the first case, the study is termed as somatology and in the second case, it is called osteology — the study of bones. In somatology, the characters are observed, measured and analysed serologically. I am concerned with the 'Human Hair', which comes under observational methods called somato-scopic, that which is seen even with the naked eye.

Hair is one of the outward characters, along with skin and eye, which have been the determining traits to classify or typify different branches or groups of *Homo sapiens*.

The paper is especially aimed at enlightening the people, who cut or destroy hair or even change and distort their pigmentation, ignorantly think-

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ing of them as useless, thus depriving themselves of this invaluable gift of nature and becoming apostates in the eyes and sanctity of Sikh religion.

There is no animal other than man who thinks about his origin, development, past, present and future, and uses both reason and imagination. So he has also been thinking about his own body, its natural characters, respective functions of its parts, adaptation to his needs, environment, climate and consequent variations. So is his case with his hair, which decreased from his anthropoid or ape-stage to his huminid position.

Functionally, the hair are of three types — protective, tactile like sensory organs, and excretory, which excrete a substance which oils them to make them smooth and shiny. The hair are grown on the body of the foetus and cover it just in the form of a woolly layer, but this layer is shed a few weeks before birth and is replaced by new growth. This layer is called *lanugo*. All the human fetuses are born with a good growth of hair on head, on which man has the maximum amount of hair throughout his life, except when he reaches senility and hair are shed, and in most cases partly or complete baldness takes place.

The different human populations have different types of hair in forms and patterns. The hair are more on the body of some racial groups and less on some ethnic groups, in which genes or heredity and environs both play their role.

The hairs grow in armpits and pubes on attaining puberty, and so also grow at this stage on lips and cheeks in males, called moustaches and beard, respectively. The hair on head are the longest on human body. The Mongoloid people do not have much quantity of hair on their faces and on rest of the body, whereas the Ainus of Japan are the most hairy people in the world. The hair on the head have been protecting man from inclemencies of weather and climate; cold, heat and rain — besides protecting him from injuries. The Caucasoid group, to which we belong, have straight and wavy hair — having abundant growth on the regions of the body where they naturally grow. The apocrine and eccrine glands regulate body temperature through hair. That is why the hairs are called temperature regulators.

Nature has not produced anything blindly and purposelessly, and everything natural has some utility. The *lanugo* on almost whole body does an immeasurable good to body, but the hairs on other parts of body do not lag behind in their beneficial contribution — the hair in armpits absorb sweat and act as cushion to reduce friction of skin while walking, the hair in nose prevent entry of dust and other atmospheric floating particles harmful for lungs. The hair on eyebrows act in the same manner, and so do eye-lashes.

The pubic hairs provide cushion to save skin from injury due to friction during sex act. They grow on man's pubes in the pattern of a triangle, but on those of a woman in the form of an inverted triangle.

The hair of the head are considered from different traits : colour, form, texture, quantity, whorl, cross-section, etc. In colour, the hair may be blond, intermediate, brown, black or red. In form, the hair of the head is mostly classified as : (1) Leiotrichous or straight-haired – a) stretched or straight, thick, coarse and stiff, b) smooth or sleek, thin and soft. (2) Cymotrichous or wavy-haired – a) broad wavy, the waves are broad and lie in one plane, b) narrow wavy; short, strongly curved, the waves lying in the same plane, c) curly, the waves are deep, having large spirals not lying in the same plane. (3) Ulotrichous or woolly-haired – a) frizzly or kinky, having short deep waves, but do not form a complete spiral, b) widely knit, c) closely knit, d) filfil, the so-called peppercorn hair, which are heavily rolled, and e) spiral hair texture is of three grades; coarse, medium and fine. The quantity of hair may be scanty or thin, medium, thick or rich. A whorl on the occiput of the head may be seen which may be directed clockwise or anti-clockwise. There may be single (one), double (two) or multiple whorls. The clockwise whorl is designated as plus and anti-clockwise whorl as minus. The hair cross-section may be circular, oval or elongated. The density of beard and moustaches may be observed, and may be scarce, medium or thick. The two eyebrows may be connected at the midpoint or separated. So far as quantity is concerned, they may be scanty, medium or bushy and thick.

The space and the size of this paper being limited, I cannot describe all the traits and aspects in detail, connecting them with different physical, morphological or somatic types of Mongoloid, Negroid and Caucasoid – three major anthropological divisions of mankind, but still some interesting things about hair will be appropriate to tell here.

The shedding of hair goes on in life before senility and simultaneously the process of their replacement goes on. On an average three years is the life of a human hair. It is a universal phenomenon that women become bald in far few numbers than men. There is much literature proving that growth of hair increases in women during pregnancy. Generally, hair is shed due to diseases – fevers, myxoderma, sudden shock, fear, syphilis, tuberculosis and nervous illness. The eunuchs do not become bald. In exceptional cases the length of the hair of head is simply astonishing as professor C.F. Danforth mentions in his book, *Hair With a Special Reference to Hypertrichosis*, that an Indian *Sadhu* had 36 feet long hair on his head. The human hair is very strong and elastic, comparable only with Indian rubber. An average natural hair can

bear the weight of seven ounces before it breaks. If a rope is woven with all the hairs of the head of man, it can support the weight of a thousand kilograms. *The Caravan*, published from New Delhi, carried a very interesting article on human hair in its issue of 15th January, 1955. It stated, "Among the most wonderful sights in the world are the giant hair ropes which have lain outside Kyoto's Higashi Henganji shrine in Japan for well over eighty years. The largest of these ropes is 269 feet in length, 1.3 feet in circumference and 2,234 pounds in weight. The ropes were woven in 1880 when the construction of two chief buildings for the famous shrine was begun. Ropes were needed to hoist the heavy keyaki beams, and many pious women throughout the country willingly cut off their tresses, which were woven into these enormous ropes, as no other kind of rope was strong enough to hoist these massive beams and haul heavy stones.

Some people can perform remarkable feats with their hair. One such Samson is Dault Ravji Gaikwad, a forty-two year old employee of the Maharashtra State Road Corporation. His ten years old son Datta has inherited his father's hair power and they have given demonstrations throughout the state of Maharashtra. Their repertoire includes such hair-raising feats as pulling a bus with fifty passengers by the hair.

Dr Chanda Singh has devoted many years to research on human hair. He writes on page three of his pamphlet *Human Hair*, "If a human hair is placed on a bar of steel and passed through a cold rolling mill, its imprint will be visible on the steel, which shows that human hair is harder than steel".

Man has struck a difference from the hair direction of his ancestors — in antropoids, and one of them is that the hair on the back of man converge on the midline, whereas those of the anthropoid diverge. Some evolutionists and anthropo-geographers believe that the denudation of hair occurs due to migration and effects of climate. It has been recorded that the original man's hairiness did not drift in quantity from his ape-ancestors as it does today due to decrease, though of course his head has more hair. As on head, man had 880 hair per square centimeter, whereas, orangutan, chimpanzee and gibbon had 383, 400 and 546, and on back man had 696, whereas the above mentioned animals had 937, 422 and 440 respectively. At any rate man's bodily hair decreased in quantity as he drifted away from his original natural life and began to protect himself with artificial means, but even then his head retained the maximum quantity and length of hair, which in general tautological term are called *kesh*, though *kesh* means the hair of any part of human body. So, even nature has preserved the growth of hair on head to protect it as it contains the most delicate and complicated nervous system. Doubtlessly, man has lost

his original quantity of hair, yet Darwin writes in his renowned work, *The Descent of Man*, "The loss of hairy covering is a loss to man". It is a salient point to notice that the human animal is born having hairless palms and soles, which continue their nakedness throughout life. They may be soft as silk but protectively they may be strong and stiff and in certain animals they are graded in the descending order — as spines, bristles, awns, wool, fur, down. The sharp and rather natural weapons as spines are seen in porcupine and hedgehog. The hairs also convey symptoms or signals in condition of beligerent mood or fear by "standing on end".

It is not possible here to occupy an enormous space to actually quote the words of numerous scientists, who have worked and opined about different aspects of human hair, and so for inquisitive readers, here I only mention their names with due reference to their respective writings — Coon,¹ Gran,² Janusch,³ R.A.S.A.,⁴ Sarkar,⁵ Elliot,⁶ Boas,⁷ Weiner,⁸ Hulse,⁹ Hutchinson-Gregory-Lydekker¹⁰ (All three together), Yerks,¹¹ Katherine,¹² Hammerton,¹³ Morris,¹⁴ Swanton,¹⁵ Kroeber,¹⁶ Topinard,¹⁷ Hooton,¹⁸ Baur-Fischer-Leny¹⁹ (All three together), Hrdlika,²⁰ Howells,²¹ Haeckle,²² Romer,²³ Tylor,²⁴ Barnett,²⁵ Frazer,²⁶ Kephart,²⁷ Stern,²⁸ Taylor,²⁹ Haddon,³⁰ Keith,³¹ Sullvan³² and Skeat.³³

On the basis of a vast study of evolution, I offer here a definition of man. "Man is a biped, erect, walking, thinking, reasoning, speaking, tool-making, tool-using, worshipping and praying animal". In this paper, I am basically concerned with the last two traits of man — worship and prayer; who is to be worshipped and who is to be prayed to? Some super-natural power beyond his control of whom he is afraid due to his helplessness before that all-powerful power-omnipotent, omniscient and omniaudient, to which he can call by any word, term, designation or name, and there are countless names of that power which is called God, *Allah*, *Parmaatma*, *Rubb*, *Aizid* or *Waheguru*. Any method which instructs to approach and realise that power is called religion. Sikhism is one of such well-founded eleven religions of the world — their youngest brother, and so, closest to the present milieu. Here, I am discussing the essentiality and indispensability of growing uncut hair of whole body without doing any harm to them in any way and without changing their natural colour by dyeing according to the decree of Sikh doctrine — "*Sabat Soorat*" — the natural and wholesome existence.

Before touching the religious injunction and importance of human hair, I will briefly describe some other aspects of hair and man's concern with and interest in them. There are many more aspects of hair, but in this paper I mention their concern in physignomy, palmistry, religion, aesthetics, romance, spirituality, naturality, forensic science and in various esoteric

concepts in addition to their use in sorcery, as it terms them as the medium of "External Soul" of man, and the harm done to them is done also to the man concerned.

Regarding aesthetics, the beard and moustaches of a man show his masculinity and virility and in appearance these two characters have been robustly rife, along with his stature, throughout human history. So far as romance is concerned, the charming eyes and long dallying locks or tresses or *zulfs* have been a great and fascinating subject of poets and the writers of romantic prose. I believe that the Arabic, Persian and Urdu poets are at the summit of using 'lock' or "*zulf*", and if their verses pertaining to charm and beauty are collected and compiled, they can make a very huge volume of poetry. The praise and pull or attraction is described in both types of love – *Ishq Majjaazi* and *Ishq Haqeeqi*, that is physical love and spiritual love, or say love for this world and body and love for God and Soul. In religion, the love is spiritual and the beloved's locks are praised in this decorum and diction and Sikhism also does not lag behind and is Sufistic in this respect, which I will describe in this paper.

I will cite some thoughts of English writers about locks, tresses or *zulfs*. It may be clarified here that in English language, a tress refers especially to the hair or lock of a girl or a woman, the hair which are loose, long and are hanging. William Shakespeare truly realised the value of human hair and decisively and dignitarily says, "But in the way of bargain mark you me, I'll cavil on the ninth part of a hair."³⁴ Even the grey hair of old age are respected everywhere, as we read, "By common consent grey hair are a crown of glory; the only object of respect that can never excite envy."³⁵

About hair, now we look at the view which was held by the religions, which preceded the Sikh faith. As it is believed universally, the Rigved is the oldest book of the world, and Hinduism the oldest religion, if it can at all be designated as a religion, because it primarily does not fulfil the essential conditions of a religion. Neither having a particular founder nor a particular supreme scripture, nor a certain place of its origin and place of worship, due to which it is described by a famous Hindu theologian, "Hinduism is a very vague one. It has neither denotation nor connotation. It conveys no meaning to us".³⁶ He further comments, "The term Hinduism is very vague. It is to be rejected summarily – importance of names as well as forms".³⁷ A well-known crudite states, "Because of comprehensiveness and its unceasing growth, Hinduism is impossibale to define. Having no common creed or set of dogmas or practices, no universally acceptable canon, no church, and no uniformity of worship, Hinduism is thus not a religion, but a medley of faiths

linked to some degree by a common pantheon".³⁸ A creditable Hindu scholar has written, "One finds in its fold theological doctrines of different shades, religious practices of different types and numerous cults and creeds. The Hindu tradition has never prescribed uniform way of life to be followed by all".³⁹ This is the reason that another Hindu theologian of great glory has taken the resort of calling Hinduism, "Vedism".⁴⁰

At any rate, here we are concerned with the wearing, caring, protecting and preserving the naturally grown hair. So let us examine what the *Rig Veda* and other *Vedas* say about this subject. It will not be possible here to give detailed citations. Anyhow, I will try to do it briefly. My point at issue — wearing naturally grown hair without tampering with them, i.e., to cut, pluck or dye them.

Bhardwaj prays to his spiritual mentor, whom he described as the one who wears uncut long hair.⁴¹ The sage or *Rishi* named Iss recites an incantation or mantra in which deity named Ribhu⁴² is described having very lustrous and impressive beard and moustaches. A *Rishi* named Deeraghtama praises the *keshas*⁴³ of the deities Arun and Mitra, and also tells that God Agni also praised them. The Sage Jooti praises the Sun God⁴⁴ for his dazzling *keshas* which emit light (he might have meant rays). *Rishi* Vishwamittar also praises the Sun God for his *keshas*.⁴⁵ Prjapati prays for good growth and protection of his *keshas* and hair on his face.⁴⁶ Prajapati again prays for the promotion of hair on his whole body including his genitals.⁴⁷ Prajapati says that he is pleased to see others wearing all hair of body intact.⁴⁸ The *Rishi* named Kuttas⁴⁹ describes Vishnu wearing long hair. In this *slok* the word *kapper*, i.e., *kesho* — having long hair on head has been used. The *Rishi* named Prameshri describes Shiva having very long plaited hair (*jataan*).⁵⁰ The sage Pratesham praises the Agni Deity addressing him as *Kesho*.⁵¹ Jamdaggan *Rishi* got a herb from the house of Asitasya to use in order to increase the growth of his *kesh*.⁵² Brahma mentions the *kesha* of a hermit who is coming to attend the ceremony of a *yagna*.⁵³ The sage Weet Havvaya advises somebody to use certain medicine to save his *keshas* from shedding.⁵⁴ The Sage Bhrigoo advises the people never to do any harm to hair and keep them carefully.⁵⁵

Not only the *Vedas*, the other Hindu scriptures, i.e., the *Upnishads*, the *Simrities* and the *Puranas* also mention the importance of growing long hair. There is a mention of Indra and Virochan that once they both went to see Prajapati and saw him looking at the image of his face in the transparent water.⁵⁶ They asked him what he was looking at, on which he told them that he was being pleased to see himself *sabat soorat* — having his hair intact from

his feet to the top of his head. *Rishi* Yagwalk praises and similises his bodily hair as natural and important as the leaves are to the plants.⁵⁷ Another Upnishad describes the tuft or *joora* of hair as the dwelling place of God.⁵⁸ Garbho Upnishad also praises the *keshas*.⁵⁹

The *Simritis* also uphold the wearing of long hair as we find in *Manu Simriti*,⁶⁰ *Sankh Simriti*,⁶¹ *Vashisht Simriti*,⁶² *Gotam Simriti*⁶³ and *Laghuttam Simriti*.⁶⁴ The *Puranas* also talk about *keshas* and tell that Brahma himself had very long hair.

In all countries, cultures and concepts of faith, the long hair used to be so sacred that they were highly respected and were cut only when the people were punished for some religious sin, social vice or some legal crime, as we find in the *Sri Mad Bhagwat Puran* that Lord Krishna, on the intercession of Rukmani for her brother Rukman, shaves off his hair on the head, beard and moustache⁶⁵ as a substitute for death.

There goes a current legend recorded in many books that when Shivji shook and fluttered his *jataas* or long tufted and plaited hair angrily, two warriors appeared spontaneously, who desecrated the *yagna* of his father-in-law as a revenge, and the descendants of those two warriors were called *Juts*, being born of the *jataas* of Shiva.⁶⁶ The Balmiki Ramayana states that when Lord Rama started for exile from his home, he decided to lead the life of a hermit and so he plaited his long hair with the sap of a banyan tree.⁶⁷

Here it is a sad comment that the Hindus have deserted their original faith *Sanatan Dharma* of their *Rishis*, *Munis* and deities by becoming clean-shaven, and are trying hard to even absorb Sikhs in this disfigured, distorted and profane form. Some of them did it to the Sikhs forcibly and violently in 1984.

As the portraits of the great founders of religions show, they wore long hair, including Moses and Christ. Abraham is believed to be the common ancestor of Hebrews or Jews, Christians and Muslims; and not to speak of his hair on other regions of his body, even his moustaches were partly cut as a punishment for adultery — as the penalty imposed on him by his legitimate wife. But long after him, his descendants mostly began to cut their whiskers and then beards, and then undergo tonsure also. However, some of the followers of these faiths, usually the priests and religious leaders, even now grow long hair. As the *Hadees* tells, Prophet Mohammad took special care for his long head-hair, loosely hanging on his nape and back, and for the facial hair also, to keep them clean, oiled and combed. Here, my pen cannot help appreciating and paying tributes to the Muslims who through the *Hadees*, as inherited in Islamic literature,⁶⁸ have preserved the details of even the ordi-

nary activities, habits and actions of their Prophet, including description of his complete physiognomy received through his intimate contemporaries; *Ashaabs*, somatic traits which we Sikhs do not have on record.

We see a host of photographs of philosophers, hermits, rulers, scholars and scientists from ancient times to date, who wore long hair.

It is worth mentioning that like the Indians in general and the Indian sages, *rishis*, *munis*, warriors and deities, the gymnosophists of Greece used to wear long hair. Amongst Indian religious personages, Lord Krishna, who was rather more romantic than religious, was called *Kesho* — the one who wears long hair — but how strange it is that Hindus never depict his beard !

Now we come to the inseparable connection or relationship between the Sikh faith and wearing unshorn naturally growing hair — the hair of any part of the human body called *kesh*. Hence, here emerges the second title of this paper, "*Kesh* and Sikhism", Man's "*Sabat Soorat*" — the wholesome natural form is the root-concept and belief of the Sikh Gurus and Sikhism. From his very advent, man has been thinking of God anthropomorphically, as he believed that God created him as a paragon of creation in his own likeness about which it is apt to quote the Bible (The Old Testament), "And God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." And further, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; Male and Female, created He them".⁶⁹ Therefore, Moses and Christ followed the original image of God and lived as the wearers of long hair.

Like the days of yore, all the Sikh Gurus wore long hair, but this condition was irrevocably enjoined on the Sikhs by the tenth and last corporeal Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who founded the Khalsa. There are many writers of the account of Sikh History and Religion — Sikhs, non-Sikh Indians, Muslims and Europeans. Amongst the Europeans, Max Arthur Macauliffe squats at the summit, who dedicated thirty years of his life to study, research and write *The Sikh Religion* in six volumes (1909).

The events immediately on the very heels following the path leading to the birth of Khalsa were like this. The unarmed Hindus or even the Sikhs, who believed in Sikhism, were intimidated and cowed down, insulted, looted and killed merely for a wish of the Muslim rulers, and sometimes they had to face dangers to reach Guru Gobind Singh to have his sight (*Darshan*), as they were often robbed or even killed on the way. So he had resolved to make his Sikhs and impart them an identity of permanent recognition, and of course, his heart, head, emotions and imagination had already been fired with an unforgettable incident of the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, just 25 years earlier in 1675 A.D., when the Hindus of Delhi did not muster

courage even to receive the dead body of the martyr, who gave his life for their faith and cultural freedom. This incident prompted the emergence of Khalsa — the pure, purified from the dirt of the impurity of Brahminical caste system, the root-cause of disunity and weakness of Indians.

One day a company of Sikhs came and told the Guru what had happened to them and requested him to protect them, "We have found it very difficult to approach thee on account of the violence of Muhammadans. Some of our company have been killed on the way. Others have been wounded, and have returned to their homes. To whom can we look for assistance but to thee?"⁷⁰ This narration and supplication of those Sikhs was the clarion call to the conscience of Guru Gobind Singh the Great. "The Guru invited all his Sikhs to attend the great Baisakhi fair at Anandpur, without shaving or cutting their hair".⁷¹ Thousands and thousands of Sikhs attended the Vaisakhi of 1699 A.D. What happened there is well-known. But here we are concerned with *kesh* — long hair as, "The Guru always held the belief that it would be proper and advantageous to his Sikhs to wear long hair and otherwise not alter man's God-given body, and he often broached the subject to them."⁷² So in the Sikh congregation on that Vaisakhi, he made the identity of his initiated *Panj Piyare* — The Five Beloveds distinct (*niyare*). Then he gave them the discourse of conduct and their identity revolved round the pivot of five K's, "They must always wear the following articles whose names begin with a K, namely, *kesh* (long hair), *kangha* (comb), *kirpan* (sword), *kachh* (short drawers), *kara* (steel bangle)".⁷³ After initiating the five beloved ones, he requested them with folded hands, to initiate him also, which they did as he had done to them about which we read, "I am the son of the Immortal God. It is by His order I have been born and have established this form of initiation. They who accept it, shall henceforth be known as Khalsa. The Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa. There is no difference between you and me."⁷⁴

It was a unique type of initiation in the religious history of the world, about which Bhai Gurdas Singh ecstatically pours out his verses, writing and singing, "*Wah, wah! Gobind Singh Aapey Gur chela*".⁷⁵ (Wonderful, wonderful is Guru Gobind Singh, who is a Guru as well as a disciple). He also writes, "*Sir kes Dhar kar kharag ko sabh dusht pachhara*".⁷⁶ (Wearing the long hair on his head and wielding sword, he defeated his all enemies).

I have already quoted Macauliffe above, and even if you read the writings of any number of writers, you will see that *kesh* come first of all the five K's. From that very Vaisakhi day, the *kesh* became the foremost and indispensable symbol of the identity of Sikhs. What a wonder and divine vision of Guru Gobind Singh the Great, the spot where the Khalsa was founded or was born was named by him, Keshgarh Sahib !

Let us examine now what does the Sikh Scripture say about *kesh* ? And what do the *Rahitnamas*, the rules of conduct written by Sikh writers, state about *kesh* ? Both types of these sources, if put together, are twenty-eight⁷⁷ in numbers, speaking on various aspects of Sikh way of life. Anyhow, all of them rever the *keshas*. However, we may mention here what is said about them, the very cornerstone of the foundation of Khalsa, in Guru Granth Sahib, by Guru Gobind Singh himself and Bhai Nandlal Goya. The Brahmins, the leaders of Hindus, themselves had degenerated under the weight of ecclesiasticism, caste system, the practice of untouchability and cutting and shaving hair, but the Khalsa had to and has to give up all the customs, beliefs and practices of Brahmins, as a relapse to Brahminism was conducive to the extinction of the Sikh way of life against which Guru Gobind Singh warned the Khalsa, exhorting :

*"Jab Lag Rahey Khalsa Niyara,
Tab lag tej diya main sara.
Jab eh gahen bipran ki reet,
Main na karon inh ki parteet".*⁷⁸

I have given all power and effulgence to the Khalsa so long as they lead a Sikh's distinct way of life. But when the Sikhs will relapse to Brahminism, I will not trust them.

As it is associated with him by many people, he also said :

"Khalsa mero roop hai khas, Khalse mein haun karon niwas".

The Khalsa is completely my own image and I dwell within the Khalsa.

Here the word "*roop*" connotes a definite stress on wearing long hair, (and other bodily hair intact also), with a turban tied on one's head. If a clean-shaven person wears all other four symbols, he neither represents the *roop* of the Khalsa nor that of Guru Gobind Singh.

According to the Sikh belief and practice, it is the long hair which are essential coupled with turban, and as you all know, the Sikh apostasy begins with cutting, trimming or shaving hair, and then the turban on the head disappears. None should understand that I have belittled or ignored the other four K's — *kangha* (comb), *kirpan* (sword), *kara* (iron bangle) and *kachh* (short drawers). What I mean is that the long hair and turban on head speaks volumes of the identity of a Sikh, just on sight even from a distance.

Here, I feel like giving a comment. The Hindus in particular, because their population in India is many *crores*, spend millions of Rupees on cutting their hair or getting them cut from barbers, claim to be clinging to *Manu Dharam*. I have studied *Manu Simriti*⁷⁹ very thoroughly and have read that Manu speaks absolutely a different language from that of the present Hindus.

He respects uncut long hair to such a deep reverence that he advises the people to keep their hair clean, taking them to be so pious that they should not be touched without cleaning and washing their hands after eating something. The hair should not be caught by anybody rudely and dishonorably, and if anybody catches and pulls them, his hands should be cut, and even in a battlefield, the enemy should not attack one's hair.

I have already spoken about man's anthropomorphic vision of God. Let us see how it has been done in Guru Granth Sahib by the Sikh Gurus and the saints whose holy word has been included in Guru Granth Sahib. Hair and turban have been associated with the sacred appearance of God.

The *kesh* have been in religious and spiritual devotion the dearest and most valuable asset of human life and represented life of the person concerned, and though opposed to Sikh thought and belief, some non-Sikhs, especially the Hindus, offer their cut hair (tonsure) at the shrines of their gods and goddesses as if they have offered their very life to their deities. Here we are concerned with the Sikh concept about long hair, which neither cut nor harmed in any way, are used as a service to God as we find it in Guru Granth Sahib, when they are in service as a *chaur*.⁸⁰ It is offered to be used to dust the feet of the Lord.⁸¹ Anthropomorphically God has been described having "*Sabat Soorat Dastar Sira*" — having His natural visage and a turban on His head.⁸² The founder of Sikh faith depicts Him rather with more physiognomic traits :

"*Terey bankoy loen dant resala, Sohne nakk jinh lamrey wala*".⁸³

O my Lord, you have beautiful eyes and teeth, beautiful nose and long hair.

The trait '*lamrey wala*' (long hair) is especially noticeable.

The hymns of saints or *Bhagats* included in Guru Granth Sahib are called *Bhagat Bani*. The *Bhagats* had long hair and used to have a turban on their head, and some describe how the long hair⁸⁴ are burnt like dry grass when the body is cremated along with turban, as Kabir and Ravidas⁸⁵ have expressed themselves. Kabir⁸⁶ warns the proud man, who prides on seeing his slantly tied turban. Namdev praises the turban of the Lord "*Khoob teri pagri*".⁸⁷ Even Guru Arjun Dev feels blessed due to God's Grace, who has awarded and honoured him with a turban or *dumalra*⁸⁸ like a champion. Farid reminds himself of his approaching end, day by day seeing his grey beard.⁸⁹ Farid⁹⁰ describes his well cared and profusely grown long hair on his head, beard and moustaches.

Bhai Nand Lal Goya was an exceptionally devoted Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh and lived for many years in his presence. He was a great scholar

of Arabic, Persian and Hindi and wrote verses mostly in Persian. He was enamoured of the charming beauty of *kesh* and wrote verses on locks or *zulfs*, with his intense spiritual love for *kesh*, which he expressed in his different Persian works.⁹¹

For His spiritual awareness and values, *keshas* were beyond any worldly price and here I quote one of his famous verses :

"Deen duniya dar kamande aan pari rukhsare ma. Har do alam qeemte yakk tar Mooye yarey ma".

O Lord, O my friend, both, faith and the world are in the catch of your snare or string, O You who have the fairy-like cheeks, and this world as well as the next, both are not worth your single hair.

The initiated Khalsa *Panth* will ever remain indebted to Bhai Nand Lal, as out of all the *Rahitnamahs*, he is most decisive, incisive, vivid and effective in elevating and properly describing the importance and indispensability of *kesh*, and that also with a prodigal brevity :

*"Nishane Sikhi een panj harf kaaf, Hargiz na bashad een panj muaaf. Kara, Kardho, Kachh, Kangha Bidaan, Bila kes hech ast jumla nishaan".*⁹²

There are symbols of five letters — *Kaaf* (Five K's) in Sikhism, which cannot be exempted. There are — Iron bracelet, sword, short drawers and *kangha*, but they are meaningless in the absence of *kesh*.

Yet another important thing is to be described — the dyeing of hair is not allowed by the Sikh tenets. So much is said about it — pro and anti-pro — those who dye their hair do so to conceal their age to look younger than they really are. It is to de-naturalise their God-given body about which again Bhai Nand Lal writes :

*"Harf hai kaat ast een panj kaaf, Bida Nand bawarn goyam khilaf. Huqqa, Hajamat, Halal-o-haram, Ba cheeshe Hina kard ru siyah-faam".*⁹³

There are five contemptible letters *Kaaf* against which Nand Lal says, and they are smoking, shaving, flesh of an animal killed in Semitic way, illegitimate possession or doing anything evil (*haram*) and dyeing beard with myrtle (*mehndi*) or any other dye.

Sehjdhari Sikhs : The mention of *sehjdhari* Sikhs is unavoidable in the Sikh discussion of hair. Honestly speaking, without exception, they have simply become a sham so far as the Sikh faith is concerned. A *sehjdhari* Sikh used to commit to the Guru that gradually, he would give up his previous

practices and beliefs, would grow long hair and become a Singh — *Sabat soorat*, but it does not mean that a *sehjdhari* and his children and their children, generation by generation should remain *sehjdhari*. When will this circle of '*sehaj*' — slowness — end and when will they be really Sikhs ? Or will they remain clean-shaven and still be interfering in Sikh religious institutions ? It is enough to say about this matter that they will be blessed by the Guru if they quicken their pace on the path of becoming Sikhs of *kesadhari* identity from the stagnation of *sehjdhari* — generation after generation.

Hair should not be depilated from any part of the body. Apostasy has got to be stopped ! It is increasing day by day, by the destruction of an invaluable gift of nature. Long hair is the crown of Sikh faith. Guru Nanak Dev has rightly written :

"*Je jarwana par-harey jar wes kraindi aaiye*".⁹⁴

If an aggressor tries to scare away old age, even then it does come in different guises.

Here, the word *jarwana* is especially notable. The Guru has used the word aggressor for one who attempts to beguile the natural, biological and gerontological phenomenon; as old age, if concealed by dyeing hair or by depilation, does appear in bodily troubles; in the guises of decrease in eyesight, sense of hearing, pains in body, and many other sorts of ailments.

Like we disturb the natural ecology of environment, people who destroy their hair are disturbing the ecology of their body — rendering a great loss to themselves. Think of how much energy is spent on repeated growing of hair ! Of what avail is this perversion or self-destruction ?

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